



**U.S. Department of Justice
U.S. Attorney's Office
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**FORMER SOUTHWEST AIRLINES EMPLOYEE
SENTENCED TO FEDERAL PRISON IN FRAUDULENT TICKETS SCAM**

United States Attorney Johnny Sutton and Federal Bureau of Investigation Special Agent in Charge Manuel E. Mora announced that in El Paso, Oscar Enriquez Ortiz was sentenced earlier today to 19 months in federal prison and ordered to pay \$518,705.00 restitution to Southwest Airlines for orchestrating and participating in a scheme to steal in excess of \$1 million from the airline.

On August 4, 2006, Ortiz pled guilty to conspiracy to commit wire fraud.

Four other former Southwest Airlines employees—Richard De La Paz, Jr.; Michelle Christine Torres; Melissa Renee Lampton and Denise Nunez—have pled guilty to the same charge and are awaiting sentencing for their role in the scheme. Each faces up to five years in federal prison and a maximum \$250,000 fine.

Guillermo Enriquez, another former Southwest Airlines employee who pled guilty to one count of wire fraud, was sentenced on September 21st, 2006, to 6 months of home confinement, 4 years of probation, and ordered to pay restitution of \$45,006.00. Former Southwest Airlines employees Barbara Wilson and Selena De La Torre, who stole \$5,000 and \$3,000 respectively, have repaid the company and are in pre-trial diversion programs.

From March 2000 through January 2003, De La Paz, Torres, Ortiz, Lampton, Nunez and Wilson sold passenger tickets at SWA's El Paso, Texas, station. During the course of business, used SWA tickets collected by agents are supposed to be placed in envelopes and sent to the company's accounting firm. The defendants intercepted used airline tickets and reused them in subsequent cash ticket transactions. After the transaction, the defendants would pocket the cash representing the value of the used ticket. De La Torre and Enriquez carried out the same scheme independently during their tenure with Southwest Airlines; De La Torre, from February 2001 to July 2001 and Enriquez, from January 2000 to August 2002.

This case was investigated by the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Assistant United States Attorney William F. Lewis, Jr., is prosecuting this case on behalf of the Government.

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